

MINUTES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

August 14, 2014

**American Legion Post 131
610 West Munising Avenue, Munising, MI 49862**

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

J.R. Richardson, chairman
John Madigan
John Matonich, vice chairman
Rex Schlaybaugh
Louise Klarr
Tim Nichols
Vicki Pontz

Present for DNR Staff

Keith Creagh, DNR director
William E. Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff
Hal Martin, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC
Other department staff

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman **J.R. Richardson** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 4:19 p.m.

UP Update

Stacy Welling-Haughey provided highlights of the various divisions, including the Fisheries stocking efforts which have been occurring in the Upper Peninsula (UP), the Wildlife regional response activities and regional meeting and activities with constituents. She also noted that ADA renovations have been completed at the Sault Ste. Marie field office. **Haughey** discussed the economic impacts of the Natural Resources Trust Fund in the UP. **Haughey** also thanked the East and West Citizens Advisory Council for all they have helped accomplish in the past six years.

Natural Resources Deputy **Bill Moritz** updated the commission on Graymont, the limestone mining company that has proposed a land transaction involving state-managed public land near Rexton in the UP. The Land Exchange Review Committee, the department's body that reviews

proposed land transactions, met earlier in the month and voted to continue to table the application from Graymont to purchase public land for the purpose of underground mining and some surface mining. The department will continue to work with Graymont to address concerns raised in numerous comments they have received from tribes, local units of government and other interested parties regarding the company's proposal. Among issues that need further discussion are environmental protections, recreational access, whether a land sale is the right construct for this transaction and further analysis of the value of the minerals.

Michigan Wildlife Council

Marketing and Outreach division chief, **Kristin Phillips** introduced **Carol Rose**, chair of the Michigan Wildlife Council to the commission. She reminded the commission that the council was created to oversee the expenditures of funds from the \$1.00 surcharge from the various hunting and fishing licenses. **Rose** provided an update to the commission on their first meeting which was held during the first week of August. The mission of the council is to promote the essential role sportsmen and women play in furthering wildlife conservation and to educate the public on hunting and fishing and the taking of game. To accomplish this task the council will be selecting a third party media/marketing/advertising firm to assist the council in the development of a comprehensive media-based public information and education program that will focus on how hunting, fishing and the taking of game are necessary for the conservations, preservation and management of our natural resources. The council is made up of nine members. This council is to be modeled after the Colorado wildlife council and their Hug a Hunter campaign. Two subcommittees were chosen during their meeting, which include one to come up with an operational plan for the council and the second is for the development for request for proposals for marketing firms. She also shared what they plan on doing in upcoming meetings. **Rose** looks forward to developing a program that is unique to Michigan.

Commercial Forest Lands and Deeryards/UP Habitat Workgroup

Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** noted that they are in the process of forming a UP habitat workgroup. It will be a temporary advisory workgroup made of up of wildlife and forestry staff, federal forest managers, members of the Natural Resources Commission, wildlife and forestry interests. The groups' charge is habitat enhancement and forest planning that benefit both wildlife and timber products. **Mason** shared the charges for the workgroup. The workgroup will be looking at optimizing commercial timber production and wildlife habitat on the commercial forest lands.

Mason also took this opportunity to introduce new UP wildlife staff members to the commission and the audience.

Trapping on Commercial Forest Lands

Russ Mason states that trapping activity on commercial forest lands does not require landowner consent to leave traps overnight. Normal trapping activity is allowed under the definition of hunting.

Timber Advisory Council Update

Richardson provided an update on the August meeting. He noted that there was good direction/energy at the meeting, many stakeholders. Within the next six months they will have an internal ICC group give a recommendation to Governor's office with ideas on power and how to use wood resources within the state. They are taking a measured approach on what to do with wood-based resources. **Creagh** notes under the Farm Bill, there is the Regional Conservation Partnership Programs, consulting private foresters put together a healthy forest, young forest initiative, which is for roughly 11 million acres. This will help get produce fiber from the non-industrial private lands.

Introduction of Smokey Bear

Keith Creagh welcomed Smokey Bear and noted that on August 9, Smokey Bear celebrated his seventieth birthday. Forest Resources division staffer **Celeste Chingwa** shared a few interesting facts about Smokey. She paid homage to Smokey Bear for 70 years of fire prevention. Partners gathered to recognize Smokey for wildfire prevention efforts and increasing public awareness.

Legislative Report

Chief of Staff **Dennis Knapp** provided a report on what happened August 13, 2014 in the Senate. The Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act was passed by the Michigan Senate with a vote of 23-10. The citizen initiative reestablishes NRC authority to designate game species, establish the first open season and regulate taking of fish, also provides earmarked funding for invasive species work and provides free hunting licenses for active military personnel. The citizen-initiated legislation is now before the House of Representatives and will be voted on August 27. If approved, the ballot proposals will be moot. If not approved by the House, the three proposals will be on the ballot in November and the proposal receiving the most votes will prevail.

Hunter's Safety Instructor's Award

Rick Commenator received a Hunter Education Instructor Award for his 43 years of service in that program, which has been critical to safe hunting seasons in Michigan.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 5:12 p.m.)

Rory Mattson and **John Lucas** from UPSA came to discuss game purchased lands and proposed a joint venture to look at them being the number one priority in the UP. **Mattson** notes that there is much opportunity but wants to increase game populations. Committee

should set up to look at those lands and those lands only. They are asking to produce a document; a game species conservation plan for the UP on game purchased lands.

Mattson also talked about the deer populations in the UP, which will be lowest this year that they have ever been. He asked for the department and the NRC to announce a plan early this fall for deer feeding.

Dan Eichinger, new Executive Director of MUCC, introduced himself to the commission. He also recognized MUCC board members present. Talked about their policy making efforts along with the on the ground event that took place with the Governor yesterday. **Eichinger** thanked **Creagh**, **Moritz** and **Mason** for their support. Their highest legislative priority is the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. He thanked all sportsmen and women and partner organizations for their support and their efforts.

Ron Burris, new Board President of MUCC introduced himself to the Commission.

Amy Trotter, Resource Policy Manager, and **Drew Youngedyke**, MUCC discussed the 2014 resolutions that were passed at the recent MUCC convention. There were 13 resolutions passed this year. They are currently analyzing what goes into implementing these resolutions.

Tony Demboski, President, UPSA, provided details of the meeting held the previous evening with Director **Creagh**. He also shared some statistics of the UPSA, whose major concern in the UP is that deer are not making a comeback. He added that game species habitat improvement that is purchased with game funds should be the number one priority in the UP. The UPSA will be partnering with the department.

G. Dale McNamee presented a handout to the commission which addressed correspondence sent to the department on June 26, 2014. The letter was regarding a road closure that affects 1500 acres in Menominee County. He requests that a meeting that is to be held in Stephenson in September be open to the public, not just the adjacent land owners. He also mentioned that GEM area in the UP that will be walk in only. He would like to see conditions and policies in the land strategy that allows seniors motorized access to these areas. Director **Creagh** commented that the land strategy's intent is not to close land to access.

George Lindquist, UP Whitetails of Marquette County, requests that the department end all deer hunting in the UP by December 10. He shared several reasons for this request, including that UP wintering deer herd is already heavily stressed with poor food availability and heavy predation by wolves, coyotes, and bobcat.

Carl Marsh, Bruce Township Supervisor, Chippewa County wanted to discuss proposed Conley boat launch on the St. Mary's River. He thinks this would make an ideal boat launch and a

place for parking for ice fisherman. Commissioner **Madigan** comments that staff members are working diligently to come to a favorable conclusion on this issue.

Glen Tolksdorf discussed the Keweenaw Trails and is looking for the support of the department on recreation authority to get trails permanently in place. If they could do this then they could get GMO (a big landownership in the UP) to buy trails, which would mean much for the economics of the area and of the state as well. **Creagh** adds that the department will work with them. It is a priority for the local economies.

Kathy English brought up the topic of mining in the UP (Chippewa/Mackinac counties), sharing what she believes will happen if the Graymont transaction goes through. Mining will destroy forests, endanger plants and wildlife, and the beauty the citizens move there for. She recommends that the officials talk to the people of the Eastern UP.

Don Frederick of Rexton, is very concerned about losing this piece of land in the Chippewa/Mackinac counties areas to mining. The state will lose much by the mining project. Frederick is concerned about air quality, water wells, land value and roads. He believes roads will be severely damaged by the mining operation. He asks the commission to take this into consideration when making the decision.

Steve Wyckoff, a CWAC member, talked about the waterfowl regulations; 7-day early teal season, decrease in canvas back limit and two hen limit mallard limit in the bag. The CWAC concurs with these recommendations.

Richard Schueuke, UP Whitetails, brought up the last two severe winters have been extremely hard on the deer herd. He would like to see the department do something about this, noting that winter habitat improvement is needed.

Doug Scheuneman came as a representative of the Alger County Fish and Game Alliance and appreciates what the commission has done in the past and what they will do in the future for the sportsmen and women of the UP. They also appreciate the meeting being held in Munising. As retired forester, he is in favor of whatever the commission can do to help the forest products industry.

Dean I. Reid spoke in favor of Graymont's proposal. He thinks this would be a good proposal for the eastern end of the UP. All of the land will be open to the public except where active mining will be occurring on the surface. Local boards support this proposal. He asks that the Director favorably go with this proposal.

Jim Thomas and **Don Britton** note that there will be a request for a Director's order in the next couple of months for part of the Heritage Trail-Winthrop Junction to the Humbolt line. They have been upgrading 5 miles for year around multiple use trails. Their group is a state-

recognized trail authority and they formed a partnership with the department earlier this year to manage the trails on the Iron Ore Heritage Recreational State Land. Recently there was a bridge burned, there is no longer 4-wheeler or walkers and bikers connection. Cost to rebuild the bridge is covered by insurance, with the exception of \$1000. Looking at working with snow machine club to come up with this money. They are also working with the mining company to establish ORV trails thru their property. Have to find a way to meet with CN to use same type of crossing in Negaunee. They need help in getting passage for ORVs. **Britton** suggested legislative language for motorized crossings to accommodate this so railroads can't hold them hostage. **Matonich** makes the suggestion to look at similar language regarding crossings that CN has already agreed to, this may be a way to change this. They will be getting a hold of **Haughey** for assistance. **Creagh** suggests that our friends at MDOT may be able to assist with this.

Evelyn Burgess came to support the Graymont project. She thinks it will be very productive for the Rexton area. She has researched Graymont carefully, because this is where her family lives and all information she found out about Graymont was positive.

Bryan Reynolds, from UP Whitetails Marquette County, has a very deep passion for deer. He thinks our seasons are too long with the deer populations we have now. He would like the department to look at shortening the season to take pressure off the resource. **Reynolds** would like deer hunting to stop by the middle of December. **Matonich** clarified the necessity of more deer data. The people that are hunting those areas need to get the data in.

Jeremy Reeb came to testify in regard to Graymont and mining in the Chippewa/Mackinac County areas, and that he believes it is a win-win for the state and the area.

Alan Ettenhofer gives his thanks to the director/department for grants, Bill Scullon for DRIP funds grant, and adds they are planting many trees. **Ettenhofer** provided an update on what his group is doing with grant funds. He noted that there were many positive comments at the coalition meeting that was held in Escanaba the previous evening. He thanks the department for boots on the ground.

Art Mills shared his thoughts on the Graymont mining project. He does not want to see the UP torn up.

Dorothy Mills also shared her thoughts on the Graymont project. She doesn't think it will bring enough jobs. The area is a retirement and vacation community. She asked that the director deny this project.

Al Garavaglia Supervisor, Hudson Township, supports the Graymont project, and added that they need people to move back to the area and something is needed to get jobs back in the

community. He would like to see the taxable value increased. Projections have been done, although Hudson Township revenue would be neutral, the school would get 18 mills.

Tony Retaskie from the Upper Peninsula Construction Council shares with the commission that the council supports the sale of the land to Graymont for the Rexton Project.

Chairman Richardson adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 6:44 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 6:44 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Deer Management Assistance Permit Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2014.

LATE MEMO-Deer Management Assistance Permit Discount Technical Change, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 13 of 2014.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, July 10, 2014

Commissioner **Madigan** made a motion that the minutes of the July 10, 2014, NRC meeting be approved. Commissioner **Pontz** supported the motion. **Richardson** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was then taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Waterfowl and Other Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations for 2014-2015, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 12 of 2014.

Commissioner **Matonich** moved that the Wildlife Conservation Order No. 12 of 2014, Migratory Game Bird Regulations; Early Seasons, Managed Waterfowl Area Regulations be adopted. Commissioner **Madigan** supported the motion. **Richardson** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

DIRECTOR – ACTION ITEMS

Director **Creagh** listed the "Director's Action" items on the agenda and indicated he would approve these items. He did note a technical adjustment; 40% discount on antlerless licenses in the TB area of the Northern Lower Peninsula, that need to be in line with the new license package and will need to be moved prior to September 1, with the commission's approval will be open to public comment until that time. Will be signed prior to the September meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

Matonich gave a brief update on the Wildlife and Fisheries Committee reports and made note of Kelsey Schlee's presentation on the impacts of brook trout in future generations with climate change.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner **Nichols** comments that the commission greatly appreciates the many thanks they have received, but noted that we need sound science and partners to plan for the future. He thanked the audience for their efforts as well. It can't be done alone and they appreciate it.

Commissioner **Matonich** shared that he attend the UPSA meeting in Munising a couple of weeks previous, and they discussed a great number of issues. He commented that we have a very good relationship for the future. He thanked Commissioner **Madigan** and the town of Munising for doing a great job hosting this meeting.

Commissioner **Klarr**, great to be in Munising and has enjoyed her time there.

Commissioner **Pontz** appreciates the great hospitality always received from the Upper Peninsula.

Commissioner **Madigan** thanked all for coming to Munising.

Commissioner **Schlaybaugh** thanked Commissioner **Madigan** and the people of Munising for all the hospitality.

Chairman **Richardson** added that it's a beautiful place and he also thanked Munising and Commissioner **Madigan**.

Director **Creagh** thanked Commissioner **Madigan** and Munising for hosting the meeting.

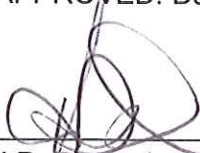
Next Meeting

Chairman **Richardson** announced that the next regular meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, September 11, 2014 at the MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing. Committees meeting in August will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries, NRC Marketing, Partnership and Outreach Advisory Committee, and the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration.

Adjournment

Commissioner **Madigan** made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner **Klarr** seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 9/11/14



J.R. Richardson, NRC Chairman



Keith Creagh, DNR Director